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Testimony by: Jill Fritz

In Support of: H.B. 6042 and H.B. 6043

Committee: House Agriculture

Date: April 28, 2010

My name is Jill Fritz and I am the Michigan State Director for The Humane Society of the United States (HSUS). We are the nation's largest animal protection organization with over 11 million members and constituents, including more than 360,000 in Michigan. I am submitting testimony in support of both H.B. 6042 and H.B. 6043.

One of the most critical responsibilities of those in the animal care and sheltering field is to provide the most humane death possible for dogs and cats when euthanasia is necessary. The term "euthanasia" is derived from Greek, meaning "good death." To be humane, every euthanasia technique must result in painless unconsciousness, followed by respiratory, then cardiac arrest, and ultimately death. Carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide, whether produced from dry ice or generated from any other method, are not acceptable methods of euthanasia for dogs and cats.

The many limitations of carbon monoxide make the method less practical, considerably slower, and more expensive than lethal injection. Old, sick, or injured animals may have poor blood pressure or weak hearts, which may delay the effects of carbon monoxide, causing them to experience distress prior to unconsciousness. Animals under the age of four months may not have the lung capacity to inhale enough carbon monoxide to be effective. In pregnant animals, it is likely that the mother will die from exposure to carbon monoxide before the unborn puppies or kittens. Consequently, it is possible that the puppies or kittens will die as a result of the mother's death (by suffocating to death) rather than from exposure to carbon monoxide.

Carbon monoxide is also a danger to those in the animal care and sheltering field. It is a hazardous substance: it is highly toxic and has no odor, no color, and no taste. It is one of the leading causes of accidental poisoning in the United States and repeated exposure to carbon monoxide, even at low levels, can result in long-term effects, including (but not limited to) impaired memory, breathing difficulties, muscle weakness, heart irregularity, and brain damage. Exposure among pregnant women can cause low birth weight in their infants.

We thank Representative Jones and Representative Miller for introducing this humane legislation, and we urge its support by Michigan legislators.

Jill Fritz (517) 515-3839 ifritz@humanesociety.org



Protecting Children & Animals Since 1877

Michigan Animal Shelters that utilize the gas chamber to euthanize

A phone survey of all municipal animal control shelters in Michigan was conducted to determine euthanasia methods for shelter cats, dogs and other animals. Below are the results.

EBI = Euthanasia by Injection

Eleven (11) shelters currently utilize gas to euthanize animals:

Berrien County Animal Control (carbon monoxide) – Has an EBI backup Branch County Animal Control (carbon monoxide) – Has an EBI backup Cass County Animal Shelter (carbon dioxide) – Has an EBI backup Gratiot County Animal Shelter (carbon monoxide) – Undergoing EBI training Lake County Animal Shelter (carbon monoxide) – Has an EBI backup and transitioning to EBI

Mecosta County Animal Services (carbon dioxide)

Midland Animal Control (carbon monoxide)

Shiawassee County Animal Control (carbon dioxide for ferals and wildlife)

St. Joseph County Pound and Animal Control (carbon monoxide)

Huron Township Animal Shelter (carbon monoxide)

Van Buren County Animal Control (carbon monoxide) – Has an EBI backup

Midland voted 4-6-10 to ban the chamber